

Abstracts of Articles

“A Change in the Forest: Myth and History in West Java” by ROBERT WESSING

This paper analyses a myth about the transition from Vaisnava hegemony to Muslim rule in West Java. It analyses the various contexts in which these events took place and traces the careers of both the mythical and historical persons involved, showing how these tend to merge into each other and how, by reference to the shamanistic background of both the Hindu and the Muslim ruler, the transition between these two eras is successfully bridged and made understandable.

“Myth, History and Modern Cultural Identity Among Hunter-Gatherers: A Borneo Case” by BERNARD SELLATO

This analysis of a recent manuscript by a leader of a forest nomadic group of Kalimantan shows a multi-staged manipulation of the historical tradition, in connection with ancient and modern, political, cultural, and religious factors, and examines internal contradictions due to the ongoing alteration of the mode of subsistence, from hunting-gathering to swidden agriculture.

“On the Possible Cham Origin of the Philippine Scripts” by GEOFF WADE

Through comparing the graphs used in the Philippine scripts with those of epigraphic and “modern” Cham, this article suggests that the Philippine scripts are probably derived from Cham, rather than from the scripts of island Southeast Asia. Chinese and other textual evidence is cited to show links between the Philippines and Champa from at least the eleventh century.

“Trương Định and Vietnamese Anti-Colonialism, 1859–64: A Reappraisal” by MARK W. MCLEOD

The essay focuses on the relationship between the guerrilla leader and the Huế court during the French conquest of southern Vietnam. Trương Định anti-French resistance was initially supported by the Tự-đức Emperor, but the Emperor decided to appease France after 1862. Trương Định continued his anti-French resistance in violation of imperial orders. However, Trương Định was not considered rebellious since the Vietnamese Confucianism was flexible enough to permit principled opposition to unwise imperial policies.

“On the Writing of Lao History: Continuities and Discontinuities” by MARTIN STUART-FOX

There is a problem in writing Lao history because of discontinuities in the existence of the Lao state. One way to deal with these is to identify continuities that transcend them. These include the political structure of the *muang* and patterns of ethnic interaction. Problems of periodization are also discussed.

“Syrup in the Wheels of Progress’: The Inefficient Organization of the Philippine Sugar Industry” by MICHAEL S. BILLIG

The organization of the Philippine sugar industry evolved to protect the profits of powerful sugar producers. In recent years, however, the influence of rural agrarian elites has been superseded by that of the urban industrial, financial and commercial sectors. By failing to provide incentive to improve productivity, and by inducing high prices for domestic sugar consumers, this organization is now causing the decline of the sugar industry. Unless producers are able to respond in a concerted manner, this century-old industry will collapse in the near future.